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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD, AF/S, AF/RA
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT KANSTEINER/NATSIOS BRIEFING;
HARARE

¶1. The transcript of a press briefing by USAID Administrator Natsios and A/S Kansteiner on food aid to Southern Africa received prominent placement in the government-controlled daily "The Herald." The independent weekly "The Financial Gazette" also published a Reuters account of the Natsios/Kansteiner press briefing.

¶2. Under headline "Plot to oust President: U. S. masterminds plan; SADC states deny involvement" the "Herald" (08/22) carried the following lead story:

"The U. S. claims it is working with the European Union (EU) and three SADC countries to topple President Mugabe and his government from office but the African governments yesterday scoffed at the American claims. U. S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Mr. Walter Kansteiner claimed his government was working with South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, the EU, several other countries throughout the world, civil society and some journalists in the private media in Zimbabwe to remove the President and government from office. But South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique yesterday distanced themselves from Mr. Kansteiner's statement, saying they were not aware of any such plans.

"South Africa's presidential spokesman Mr. Bheki Khumalo said his government was not aware of any plans to remove the Zimbabwean government from office. 'I don't know anything about it. I don't know where it (Mr. Kansteiner's statement) comes from,' said Mr. Khumalo. Botswana denied it was working closely with the U. S., South Africa and Mozambique to find ways of isolating President Mugabe. 'Botswana is not involved in such a scheme,' Botswana foreign affairs spokesman Mr. Clifford Maribe told 'The Herald.' 'We are not aware of these reports. We will not participate in such schemes. Issues related to Zimbabwe are being handled by Zimbabwe as a sovereign country,' Mr. Maribe said. 'Botswana will never meddle in the internal affairs of another country.' Mozambique also denied the statement by the U. S. official, saying it was not aware of such a plan to remove the government of Zimbabwe from office. 'I am not aware of any initiative of that kind with us. Our approach to Zimbabwe is to bring everybody on board to find solutions,' Reuters quoted Mozambican Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Leonardo Simao as saying.

". . . USAID head Mr. Andrew Natsios, speaking at the same press conference, said the current food shortage in Zimbabwe were a result of drought but went on to attack the government's land reform program, claiming that white commercial farmers whose farms have been acquired for resettlement were being prevented from farming to feed the nation. Statistics, however, show that smallholder and communal farmers produce a large proportion of Zimbabwe's staple crop, maize. . . . He also accused the government of distributing food along political lines. But investigations by the EU and World Food Program offices in Zimbabwe have shown that aid was not being distributed according to political affiliation. Representatives of the two organizations said at a recent Press conference in Harare that food was going to deserving cases."

¶3. Under headline "Club gears up to expel Zim" (a page-one report on the possibility that the Commonwealth could expel Zimbabwe), the "Financial

Gazette" (08/22) also mentioned A/S Kansteiner's remarks: ".In a sign of growing impatience by the international community over Harare's conduct, U. S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner this week said Washington did not recognize Mugabe's presidency and wanted him isolated further. . . .Zimbabwe accused the U. S. and Britain yesterday of a `racist' campaign to isolate Mugabe internationally and maintain white economic dominance in southern Africa. . . .' The legitimacy of our political system or our President is not dependent on America, Britain or any other country but on Zimbabweans,' a senior Zimbabwean official said. `The bullying tactics that America and Britain are using against us are meant to frustrate our quest for social and economic justice, to stop our program to redistribute some of the very large tracts of land held by whites here to the indigenous black people,' he said."

SULLIVAN